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ABSTRACT

Because many experiences needed by vocational agriculture students typically occur during the summer, the contracts of Ohio vocational agriculture teachers have been longer than the typical 9-month academic school year. A study examined the attitudes of vocational agriculture instructors throughout Ohio toward summer programs so that policymakers and administrators in the state could take teachers' attitudes into account when planning summer activities in the area of vocational agriculture. Questionnaires were mailed to a random sample consisting of 190 of Ohio's 730 vocational agriculture teachers. Eighty-three percent (158) of these teachers responded to the survey. The majority of those surveyed had positive attitudes toward summer programs. A significant correlation was not found to exist between teachers' attitudes and their perception of administrators' attitudes. Number of years taught and other summer employment were not predictive of respondents' attitudes. Teachers in some taxonomy areas, including forestry, agricultural industrial equipment and services, and animal production and care, had significantly lower attitudes than did teachers in other areas. It was recommended that policies and programs be formulated to remediate this difference in attitude levels. (Tables include questionnaire statements and rank of responses.) (MN)

ATTITUDES OF OHIO VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHERS TOWARD SUMMER PROGRAMS

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INTRODUCTION

Due to the seasonal nature of agriculture, many of the experiences needed by vocational agriculture students have occurred during the summer months. For this reason, the contract of the vocational agriculture teacher has been longer than the typical nine-month academic school year. Students gain experiences during the summer which could not be gained at other times of the year (Miller and Parks, 1981).

The taxonomy area of instruction in vocational agriculture dictates the nature of the experiences which are uniquely available in the summer. This has resulted in Ohio varying the required amount of extended service from one to twelve weeks depending upon the taxonomy area. Economic concerns in the school districts nurtured these distinctions. New Ohio standards were adopted in November 1982.

Numerous authors (Miller and Moss, 1980; Turner, 1974; Muncrief, 1976; Oades, 1979; Halcomb, 1974; and Lee, 1980) have espoused the desirability and necessity for a quality summer program in vocational agriculture. Newcomb (1978), Richardson (1982), and Combs and Todd (1974) pointed out that the quality of the summer program rested with the teacher. With the quality of the program resting on the teacher, then their attitudes are important. An attitude is a predisposition to behave in a certain manner (Kerlinger, 1973). Attitudes toward summer programs, then, would provide a window through which to view the potential behavior of teachers of vocational agriculture.

Binkley (1976), Williams (1981), Cepica (1977) and Hilton (1979) have reported the importance of the summer program to a quality vocational agriculture program. The determination of teachers attitudes toward this important component of the program was appropriate if quality programs were to be continued in Ohio. Luft (1976), Hendren (1976), and Lantis (1975) had ascertained appropriate summer activities which helped form the dimensions of the attitude domain.

Once attitudes were determined, they might be explained more fully by selected characteristics of the program or teachers. Appropriate characteristics were identified from the work of Lantis (1975), Arrington and McCracken (1981), Ford (1970), Robinson (1976), McMillion and Auville (1976), and Watkins (1983).

The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes of vocational agriculture instructors toward summer programs so that policy makers and administrators would know the opinions of those affected by the standards. If variability in attitudes existed within the group, then could it be explained by characteristics of the program or teacher?

PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were: 1) to determine the attitudes of Ohio vocational agriculture teachers toward summer programs, and 2) to determine any differences or relationships existing between these attitudes and (a) length of extended service, (b) taxonomy area, (c) years of experience teaching vocational agriculture, (d) educational level of the teachers, (e) additional summer employment other than teaching, and (f) teacher perceptions of the attitudes of their administrators toward summer programs.

PROCEDURES

This was descriptive survey research. The target population was 1983-84 Ohio vocational agriculture teachers (N = 730). A stratified, by taxonomy area, proportionate random sample (n = 190) was drawn (Cochran, 1977) to produce 95 percent confidence with a five percent margin of error; thus, sampling error was controlled. Frame and selection errors were controlled by utilizing an accurate, up-to-date list of teachers from which the random sample was drawn.

A researcher-developed questionnaire was utilized for data collection. Content validity was established by a panel of experts and internal consistency reliability was .82 with Cronbach's alpha procedure. Forty-five items comprised the instrument scaled with a four point Likert-type scale.

Two mailings were utilized with the second as a follow-up. An OSU pencil was used as an incentive. Non-response bias was controlled by comparing late to early respondents (Miller and Smith, 1983), and a t-test revealed no significant differences between respondents and non-respondents. The data sample was comprised of 158 (83%) respondents.

Data were described with frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Analyses were conducted with correlations, t-tests, ANoVa, and LSD.

RESULTS

A study of this nature could benefit state and local supervisors of agricultural education by revealing teacher characteristics which are correlated with positive attitudes toward summer programs. This would enable supervisors to help teachers improve the effectiveness of their summer programs. In improving summer program effectiveness, vocational agriculture teachers stand to benefit in that they would have a better case for justifying the continuation of extended service contracts in the future.

TABLE 1
Mean, Standard Deviation, and Rank of Teachers' Responses by Statement

Statement	n	Mean	S.D.	Rank
21. A teacher should provide individualized instruction and supervision of student SOEP's during the summer.	155	3.62	0.60	1
30. A teacher should visit each prospective student during the summer to discuss the vocational agriculture program.	156	3.58	0.54	2
5. Technical inservice workshops like "Technical Update" or those provided by other teachers or the Cooperative Extension Service are worthwhile activities for a teacher to attend in the summer.	60	3.57	0.61	3
40. I would prefer not to have an extended service contract if given the choice.	155	3.57*	0.73	3
12. A teacher does not need any summer time to clean and organize the vocational agriculture classroom and laboratory.	60	3.56*	0.62	5
26. The teacher should attend and/or conduct county and state fair activities.	153	3.50	0.54	6
24. As a part of the summer program, the vocational agriculture teacher should visit with managers and employees of agriculturally-related businesses to develop good public relations.	156	3.47	0.51	7
22. The summer is a good time to contact employers of students for feedback on the needs of the students and the vocational agriculture program.	152	3.46	0.54	8
10. Vocational agriculture teachers should allot some summer time for maintaining laboratory facilities and equipment.	157	3.45	0.57	9
14. Teachers should work with FFA committees, particularly the executive committee, during the summer.	154	3.45	0.56	9

TABLE 1 (continued)

Statement	n	Mean	S.D.	Rank
6. Vocational agriculture teachers should attend at least one professional meeting such as the OVATA conference during the summer.	156	3.43	0.75	11
23. During the summer a teacher should help students plan and locate placement for their SOEP's.	154	3.33	0.57	12
15. Students have too many summer activities to conduct or attend FFA meetings or FFA activities during the summer.	153	3.31*	0.64	13
27. Part of the summer should be used to develop lesson plans and teaching aids such as specimen collections.	156	3.30	0.57	14
2. Some time should be used in the summer to meet with adult program participants on a one-to-one basis.	134	3.27	0.67	15
7. Few ideas for program improvement can be gained by visiting other vocational agriculture programs during the summer.	155	3.26*	0.87	16
13. A teacher can maintain an adequate inventory of supplies and equipment during the regular school year without spending any summer time for this.	157	3.17*	0.78	17
32. The summer is a good time to make necessary revisions to the curriculum and lesson plans.	157	3.17	0.60	17
8. Teachers should gain work experience in agriculturally-related fields during the summer to increase their expertise in those areas.	157	3.13	0.69	19
25. A teacher should meet with community service groups during the summer to obtain ideas for BOAC projects and make them aware of the vocational agriculture program and activities.	149	3.11	0.59	20
31. A teacher should schedule office hours during the summer to receive calls and complete required reports.	156	3.10	0.66	21

TABLE 1 (continued)

Statement	n	Mean	S.D.	Rank
29. The summer is a good time to order lesson materials such as filmstrips and books for the upcoming school year.	155	3.08	0.67	22
20. Teachers should conduct educational tours of agricultural industries, farms, greenhouses, etc. for students and/or adults during the summer.	156	3.05	0.72	23
41. If teachers are to conduct effective summer programs, the state should allow them more reimbursed mileage.	145	3.05	0.79	23
3. The vocational agriculture teacher is too busy to supervise the use of laboratory facilities by students and/or adults in the summer.	150	3.01*	0.88	25
11. Professional repair persons should be hired to repair laboratory facilities and equipment.	154	2.96	0.69	26
19. The summer is a good time for students to do BOAC projects.	140	2.96	0.69	26
33. During the summer, the teacher should assist in the job placement of program graduates.	148	2.94	0.65	28
35. Required reports like the "Summer Plan of Activities" or the Summary of Summer Activities" are useful to the school administration and the state.	150	2.94	0.78	28
17. Vocational agriculture teachers benefit from attending FFA Camp each summer.	131	2.91	0.77	30
39. If budgets require reductions in extended service, teachers in each of the taxonomies should have equal reductions.	150	2.90*	0.95	31
4. Vocational agriculture teachers should conduct education classes for students during the summer.	156	2.83	0.80	32
34. A teacher should meet with the advisory committee at least once in the summer.	149	2.77	0.71	33

TABLE 1 (continued)

Statement	n	Mean	S.D.	Rank
9. A teacher should be allowed to use some extended service time for earning a Master's Degree or other education.	157	2.73	0.96	34
37. Vocational agriculture teachers have had adequate training to be able to conduct an effective summer program.	148	2.68	0.69	35
4. Teachers benefit little from attending the Washington Leadership Conference Program more than once every three or four years.	83	2.65*	0.85	36
36. A summer visit by a state supervisor would be helpful to a teacher in conducting summer program activities.	145	2.56	0.78	37
1. A vocational agriculture teacher should conduct at least two educational adult programs during the summer.	130	2.55	0.82	38
38. Teachers in each taxonomy area need twelve weeks of extended service to conduct effective summer programs.	144	2.52	0.95	39
28. Evaluation of the curriculum and lesson plans is best accomplished during the regular school year.	153	2.43	0.78	40
16. School class time should be used to prepare the FFA Program of Activities.	153	2.13*	0.74	41
TOTALS		126.46	$\bar{x}$ = 3.09	

* Scale values were reversed for negatively stated items.

TABLE 2
Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank of Teachers' Responses by Statement of Perception of Administrator's Attitude

Statement	n	Mean	S.D.	Rank
44. The school administration feels that they are adequately informed of my summer program activities.	147	3.18	0.51	1
42. My school's administration is supportive of the vocational agriculture summer program activities.	156	3.11	0.80	2
45. My school administrators feel that I do not do enough "teaching" during the summer to merit a twelve month contract.	127	2.98*	0.81	3
43. If given a choice, my school's administration would prefer that vocational agriculture teachers do not receive extended service contracts.	138	2.88*	0.94	4
TOTALS		12.15	$\bar{x}$ = 3.02	

* Scale values were reversed for negatively stated items.

TABLE 3
Response Rate and Taxonomy Areas of Responding Teachers

Taxonomy Area	Number Mailed	Percent Returned	Respondents n	Respondents %
Production Agriculture	84	99	83	52.5
Animal Production and Care	5	80	4	2.5
Resource Conservation	6	83	5	3.2
Agricultural Supply, Business and Services	22	41	9	5.7
Agricultural Product Processing	3	100	3	1.9
Farm Business Planning and Analysis	9	89	8	5.1
Farm Management	3	67	2	1.3
Horticulture	29	72	21	13.3
Forestry	1	100	1	0.6
Agricultural Industrial Equipment and Services	26	71	20	12.7
Agricultural Environmental Protection	2	100	2	1.3
TOTALS	190		158	100

TABLE 4
Correlations Between Mean Scores and Selected Characteristics

Characteristics / Mean Scores	Perceived Administrator Attitudes Toward Summer Programs	Number of Paid Weeks of Extended Service	Number of Years the Teacher Had Taught Vocational Agriculture	Number of Hours Worked per Week in an Additional Summer Job
Teacher Attitudes Toward Summer Programs	0.26	0.27*	0.03	-0.27*
Attitudes of Administrators Toward Summer Programs as Perceived by the Teachers	1.00	0.36*	0.10	-0.38*

* Significant at alpha level of .05

TABLE 5
Mean Totals and Ranks of Teacher Attitudes Toward Summer Programs by Taxonomy Area

Taxonomy Area	Mean	Rank
Farm Management	3.39	1
Production Agriculture	3.14	2
Horticulture	3.13	3
Agricultural Products Processing	3.12	4
Agricultural Environmental Protection	3.12	4
Farm Business Planning and Analysis	3.11	6
Resource Conservation	3.09	7
Agricultural Supply, Business, and Services	3.06	8
Forestry	3.00	9
Agricultural Industrial Equipment and Services	2.88	10
Animal Production and Care	2.88	10
TOTAL	3.09	

TABLE 6
Significant Differences in Teacher Attitudes Toward Summer Programs by Taxonomy Area

Taxonomy Area	Direction of Significance*	Comparative Taxonomy Area(s)
Agricultural Industrial Equipment and Services	lower than	Farm Business Planning and Analysis
		Horticulture
	. .	Production Agriculture
		Farm Management
Animal Production and Care	lower than	Production Agriculture
		Farm Management

* $p < .05$, LSD

CONCLUSIONS

1) Ohio vocational agriculture teachers had positive attitudes toward summer programs. Administrators, supervisors and teacher educators should continue to encourage this outlook.

2) Ohio teachers perceived their local administrators had positive attitudes toward summer programs. The image they are conveying should be communicated to administrators.

3) A significant correlation was not found between teachers' attitudes and their perception of administrators' attitudes. One should not assume that teachers' perception of negative attitudes by administrators are a function of lowered teachers' attitudes.

4) Teachers had positive attitudes regardless of length of their contract. They perceive positively the activities listed and should be permitted to perform them, and provided time to do so.

5) Number of years taught, and other summer employment did not help predict attitudes. Attitudes were positive across groups. Lack of experience or other employment were not detrimental and statements to the contrary should not be forwarded.

6) Teachers in certain taxonomy areas had significantly lower attitudes than other areas. Policies and programs should seek to remediate this finding.

The results of Cepica (1977), Hilton (1979), and Williams (1981) regarding teachers' attitudes are supported by this study. Hilton (1979) related that teachers and administrators perceived summer activities as important and this study replicates this conclusion. The study contradicts Robinson (1976) who found a significant positive correlation between length of extended service contract and attitudes toward summer programs.

The results are generalizable to Ohio; but, to more fully describe teachers of vocational agriculture, it should be replicated in other states. A longitudinal, panel or cohort, study could determine any changes in attitude over time.

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